

Kashmiri Life Narratives

Kashmiri Life Narratives takes as its central focus writings – memoirs, non-fictional and fictional Bildungsromane – published circa 2008 by Kashmiris/Indians living in the Valley of Kashmir, India or in the diaspora. It offers a new perspective on these works by analyzing them within the framework of human rights discourse and advocacy. Literature has been an important medium for promoting the rights of marginalized Kashmiri subjects within Indian-occupied Kashmir and it has been successful in putting Kashmir back on the global map and in shifting discussions about Kashmir from the political board rooms to the international English-language book market. In discussing human rights advocacy through literature, this book also effects a radical change of perspective by highlighting positive rights (to enjoy certain things) rather than negative ones (to be spared certain things). Kashmiri life narratives deploy a language of pleasure rather than of physical pain to represent the state of having and losing rights.

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Human Rights, Pleasure and
the Local Cosmopolitan

Rakhshan Rizwan



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Introduction

The Poet and the Cassette Player

Then it begins, first with the croak of the worn-out cassette player struggling to read the tape, then a sudden loud harmonious tune, a prelude to the famous wedding song ‘Aakho Shahr-e-Sheerazo.’ People have listened to this before; the young perhaps all their lives on the radio and many older people on the same cassette player since Mahraaze appeared on that starless night at the ghat fifteen years ago . . . He sits down by the cassette player. ‘Get ready now, hold your breath, and be brave.’ All give their full attention now, eyes fixed on the Telefunken and its grave owner and operator. As the approaching dusk casts cold shadows over the group, the houses lapping over the shrine gate, the scene begins to resemble a Muharram gathering, an elegy about to rise into the sky. Everyone is silent. The tape plays smoothly. Someone’s crying in the distance. Then they hear whacks, thuds, slaps, thuds, cracks, the sounds all rolling into one another, each flurry followed by the same stern voice. Then they hear more whimperings. A spell descends on Mahraaze’s congregation. People begin to murmur, then they don’t. Mahraaze raises his hand. ‘There’s more, there’s more. I have captured many voices, my unwise dears, voices that you may or may not hear in your dreams. I have seized them with my own hands and knocked them here. You had better listen now.

(Waheed, *The Book* 116–17)

Mirza Waheed is one of Kashmir’s most prominent novelists and this excerpt, taken from his novel *The Book of Gold Leaves*, which was published in 2014 to critical acclaim, represents a local Kashmiri madman or *mott*. In the passage above, Mahraaze gathers the residents of the old city around a tape recorder that plays a strange musical score and urges them to pay heed to the voices issuing from it. Mahraaze is described as a “Persian-conversant dervish” (Waheed 99). He is depicted roaming the streets of Srinagar, the summer capital of Kashmir, with a bridegroom’s garland of Indian currency notes round his neck. He delivers spiritually-themed sermons on simplicity and minimal living from the

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city square located close to the shrine. Madmen, mystics, and dervishes are an important part of Kashmiri spiritual life and perform an array of different functions, from the sacred to the comic and the banal (Parrey, *A Victorious* 179). The word *mott* in the Kashmiri language, Koshur, translates into “mad” and also “mystic” and in a sense, the word captures the different strands of meaning associated with Kashmiri dervishes who are considered to be both mentally ill and spiritually gifted (Parrey 179). A *mott* is usually a person who is respected for knowing more about “the world than ordinary unsuspecting folk could fathom” (179). Alongside this, it is also “widely known that because his vision soar[s] in spirituality,” the *mott* is “clumsy in the mundane affairs of life” (179). In defining the public functions performed by Sufi soothsayers in Kashmir, Parrey says that they are sought by members of their community to “have meals with them, to heal the sick, to fix the jobless, to concoct pregnancies, to bless the new-born or to simply drop down alms of wisdom down their pherans” (179).

However, in the text quoted in the beginning of the chapter, Mahraaze is more than a poet and a spiritual agent; he is also a witness to the unlawful incarceration and torture of Kashmiri men, who are being detained in the basement of a captured high school that has been transformed into a military outpost by the armed forces. He manages to gain access to the inner precincts of the school-turned-detention-centre and using his outdated cassette player, he records the disembodied voices, pleas, and cries of the young men who are being held in its basement. He saves these soundbites of suffering on an old audio cassette, which originally carries a traditional Kashmiri wedding song, “Aakho Shahre-Sheerazo,” that is sung to instrumental scores of Indian classical music instruments, namely the sarangi and the santoor. This particular song, according to Waheed’s novel, used to be immensely popular among newlyweds residing in the “meadowlands” of the Valley of Kashmir and evoked memories of weddings and marriage festivities (Waheed 118). In Mahraaze’s recording, the melodious vocalization of a well-loved Kashmiri wedding song and its celebratory verses is interrupted by the sombre and splintered tonalities of torture that issue from the mouths of youthful Kashmiri bodies in postures of intense physical pain. Mahraaze manages to record the sound of “whacks, thuds, slaps, thuds, cracks,” sobs, and even screams on his audio cassette (Waheed 117).

Mahraaze’s recording is a metaphor for Kashmir itself, the famed pleasures of which have, in the past two decades, been interrupted and overwritten by enunciations and experiences of violence and pain, such that both happiness and suffering now combine to make Kashmir a unique ‘medley of torment.’ Kashmir has been represented as a paradisiacal space since the 17th century, when Moghul emperor Jahangir visited the Valley and famously remarked that “If there is a paradise anywhere on earth, it is here, it is here.” (Hogan 3). Kashmir became a part of the

European imagination through Lalla Rookh (1817), Thomas Moore's "Oriental Romance," which was published during the Romantic period (Kabir, *Territory* 56; Schimmel 295). Kashmiri shawls functioned as "concrete material manifestations of its beauty and exceptionality . . . which fulfilled the larger concerns of these narratives to educate Victorian Britons about the diverse and varied geography of the British Empire" (Zutshi, "Designed" 429). Adam Geczy writes, "Kashmir and its shawls circulated in the mid-nineteenth-century British imagination with talismanic mystique. Perhaps more than any other article, the Kashmiri shawl also showed that Victorian Britain used commodities to experience and reflect on its empire" (103). In postcolonial India, Kashmir became "a place for honeymooners and lovers" to unwind, enjoy the sights of the place and to experience romance and pleasure (Kabir, *Territory* 38). Nehru, India's first prime minister, described Kashmir as a place where "loveliness reigns and an enchantment steals over the senses" (qtd. in Kabir 38).

In the 1980s, however, Kashmir started to become a violent and militarized space, and its political destinies began to shift. This is the period represented in *The Book of Gold Leaves*, a time during which Mahraaze positions himself not only as a Sufi dervish and soothsayer but also as a political activist and a human rights witness. He shares incriminating evidence in the form of recordings with residents of the local neighbourhood, as they assemble at the shrine of a beloved Sufi saint, Shah Hamdan, in order to publicize his 'findings,' and to create awareness about the situation. "You had better listen now," he urges the multitudes of people gathering in downtown Srinagar. Partly resembling a Greek chorus, Mahraaze anticipates and guides the reactions of the audience with regards to the tableau being enacted before them, issuing edicts in the form of "There's more, there's more" or "Get ready now" and predicting that they will be traumatized by the voices and will continue to hear these haunted sounds in their dreams. Rather than gathering around the sanctum sanctorum of the shrine, Kashmiris assemble around incriminating evidence in the form of the cassette player, which momentarily becomes the focal point of political debate and spiritual and public life in Srinagar, Kashmir's summer capital.

In times of political volatility and unrest, poets and mystics such as Mahraaze are compelled to take on multiple roles and use creative mechanisms to stage protest and to voice their political concerns. In an instance in the novel, Mahraaze tries to rescue young men who have been abducted from the streets of Srinagar by a monstrous vehicle – known as the *Zaal* – by chasing it, and later berating this metallic contraption using "a long poem of expletives in a meter reminiscent of the lyric poetry form, *shruck*" (Waheed 115). Here, Mahraaze uses a traditional form of Kashmiri poetry – the *shruck* – to protest the presence of patrolling metal invaders in the streets of his city.

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The primary thematic concerns of this book can be located in this brief outline of Waheed's *The Book of Gold Leaves*. The representation of Kashmir as a curious matrix of pleasure and pain; the multiple roles taken on by contemporary Kashmiri writers, as journalists, public intellectuals, and human rights activists; the existence of human rights advocacy and activism in Kashmir; the importance of storytelling in bringing human rights issues to light; the emergence of non-violent and cultural idioms of protest in Kashmir; and finally, the role of Kashmiri life narratives, such as *The Book of Gold Leaves*, in articulating and publicizing Kashmiri lived experiences, in sparking international debate on the issue of Kashmir and in participating in the re-imagination and re-mapping of its political future: these are all the issues that are attended to within the course of this book. These concerns are tied to the central purpose of the book, which has to do with using selected Kashmiri literary works to re-define the generic contours of life narratives that can be used within the field of human rights. In this work, I will offer alternative theorizations and examples of human rights narratives that can operate within both literary and legal practice.

Mapping Kashmir

The territory of Jammu and Kashmir is a contested space, often referred to as only 'Kashmir,' and divided into Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir (IJK), which includes the Valley of Kashmir, Ladakh and Jammu, and a Pakistan-administered Kashmir, which includes "Azad" Kashmir (AJK) and sparsely populated parts of northern Pakistan (Bose 2). Approximately 10 million Kashmiris reside in Indian-administered Kashmir, and around 3 million in the Pakistan-administered part (Bose 2). The more populous and infrastructurally developed parts of Kashmir lie in India and the majority of the population of Kashmir is concentrated in the Valley of Kashmir, known as the Kashmiri *mandala* in the local language, Koshur (Kachru, "The Dying" 4; T. Schaffer 2).

The Valley of Kashmir is located on the upper Jhelum River and is considered the "heart" of Jammu and Kashmir (T. Schaffer 1). The capital of Kashmir, Srinagar, is also located in the Valley. Inhabitants of the Valley of Kashmir are primarily Koshur-speaking Sunni Muslims, but a large Shia minority resides there as well (Bose 9). In addition, a small Hindu minority also resides in the Valley and are referred to as Kashmiri Pandits (12). They share linguistic, cultural, and social ties with the Kashmiri Muslim community, but often harbour different political opinions (12). The region of Jammu is even more religiously, socially, and ethnically diverse than the Valley of Kashmir (10). Muslims constitute one-third of the population but belong to different ethnicities (10). They are either Rajputs, Gujjars or Bakerwal, and instead of speaking Koshur, speak Gojri and Pahadi (10) The rest of the population of Jammu is made up

of Sikhs and Hindus, with the latter also divided across class, ethnicity, and caste lines (10). The territory of Ladakh is made up primarily of Buddhists of Tibetan ethnicity (10). The residents of AJK (Azad Jammu and Kashmir) are mostly Punjabi-speaking and are socially and culturally distinct from the Kashmiri Muslims of the Valley and of Jammu (10). The ethnic, social, religious, and cultural heterogeneity explains the “high degree of *political* fragmentation and complexity” present in Kashmir (10). Azad Kashmir has its own autonomous government, and functions as a state within a state (Steiner).

Despite this, Christopher Snedden, the author of *The Untold Story of the People of Azad Kashmir*, argues that “Pakistanis have influenced all major Azad Kashmir appointments and elections” (125). He maintains that “Islamabad can ‘influence’ Azad Kashmiris through pressure, devolving or withholding largesse . . . or the courts, since Pakistan’s appellate courts are superior to Azad Kashmir’s courts” (126). Due to this, real power continues to lie in Pakistan’s capital, Islamabad; a claim supported by the fact that “Azad Kashmiri politicians are increasingly spending more time in ‘Kashmir House’, Islamabad, than in their capital, Muzaffarabad” (126).

The present-day conflict has its origins in the partition of the Indian subcontinent, the departure of the British, and the emergence of India and Pakistan as sovereign states in 1947. In Figure 1.1, the solid black line demarcates the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, which was one of the largest of the 562 princely states in the Indian subcontinent (Bose 14). Princely states were monarchical and dynastic territorial units, which were allowed to self-govern in exchange for being loyal to and recognizing the primacy of British colonial control over their territories (14). Following partition, princely states were invited to accede to either of the two newly independent nation states and sign an instrument of accession with them (17).

The British advised the rulers of the princely states to base their decision on the “geographical contiguity” of their kingdoms to the two new-fangled countries (Yong and Kudaisya 223). They instructed the monarchs to consult their local populations before making this momentous decision, but the guideline was issued as a general edict and had no binding legal power (223). Local rulers were not compelled by the British to choose a nation-state via a form of democratic consensus or as a response to popular feeling but were left more or less free to choose their fate and the fate of the people they governed.

In most cases, the decision to accede was fairly straightforward in light of the geographical location of the princely state and the religious and ethnic affiliations of the prince and the local population. However, in certain circumstances, the choice of accession was fraught with difficulty. The princely state of Jammu and Kashmir was one such example. Ruled by a Hindu Dogra king, its population was largely made up of politically



Figure 1.1 “Kashmir Region”

Source: *Library of Congress*, United States Central Intelligence Agency, 2003. www.loc.gov/item/2003625170/.

and economically disenfranchised Sunni Muslims (Bose 17). To complicate matters further, Jammu and Kashmir was, in principle, “territorially contiguous” to both India and Pakistan and these factors made the decision regarding accession a particularly contentious one (Bose 31). It could potentially accede to either India or Pakistan and had geographical, cultural, and linguistic ties to both territories (Yong and Kudaisya 223).

As a result of this territorial conundrum, the princely state of Kashmir remained independent for approximately two months after partition following which Hari Singh, the Dogra monarch, officially acceded to India (Schofield xi). Pakistan immediately contested the legality of this accession and hostilities broke out between the two states, until the United Nations officially enforced a ceasefire in 1949 (xi). In the more

than seventy years that have elapsed since partition, the two countries have fought each other bitterly “on the battlefield and at the negotiating table,” each desirous of incorporating Kashmir within its national borders (xi).

Kashmir has a special place within everyday language and discourse in the Indo-Pakistani region. Kashmir was introduced into our Pakistani classrooms as a literal Paradise on Earth, and the fabled beauty of Kashmir, its mountain peaks, scenic slopes, and clear blue lakes continued to exert a powerful grip over my imagination even as an adult. Kashmir became a prelapsarian space that was both real and imagined (Zinck 145). It was the mysterious ‘Beloved’ of Urdu couplets – *ghazals* – beautiful, alluring but forever unattainable and the desire for it, unrequited. It symbolized the elusive promise of an afterlife; my grandparents constantly talked about dying and being resurrected in a place as picturesque as Kashmir and living their lives surrounded by pastoral beauty and lush splendour. People reiterated that the ‘K’ in Pakistan stood for Kashmir, and that we needed to finish this bizarre game of collecting alphabets and corresponding territories in order to feel secure as a newly “imagined” community (Anderson, *Imagined* 24). In political discourse, Kashmir was our *shah rag*, our jugular vein – a visceral metaphor for the relationship between Pakistan and Kashmir, which symbolized closeness, intimacy, and co-dependence.

While colouring in the map of Pakistan as a child, our secondary school geography teacher, the disseminator-in-chief in this case of the state’s cartographic desires, instructed us to demarcate Kashmir using a series of parallel lines on Kashmir and to inscribe the words “disputed territory” on top of these lines. The rest of the provinces were to be evenly filled in with bold, solid colours signifying complete, uncontested ownership, dominion, and wholeness. The year was 2001 – (29 years after the Simla Agreement had been signed by Pakistan and India), and the UN ceasefire line had become the de facto border, known as the Line of Control (“The Puzzle”). In our “Pakistan Studies” history books, in our lessons, and on our maps, we continued to include Indian-occupied territories within our national borders, and we continued to hope that the crisscrossing, tenuous, parallel lines would transform into solid colours.

This book is not about Pakistan’s cartographic desires but about the personal and political futures that Kashmiris imagine for Kashmir. In this book, I will valorize Kashmiri voices and attempt to bring them to the fore of the discussion on this contested space and its political destiny. The Kashmir dispute, as I have highlighted, has consistently been framed as an “inter-state territorial dispute” between two belligerent, postcolonial nations (Bose 6). In many ways, this framing makes sense because the Kashmiri issue was born in the wake of the Indian subcontinent being violently divided, and the story of Kashmir is a story of competing narrative claims. However, Kashmiris are taking control of and are negotiating

their own destinies and Kashmiri voices are addressing local publics, as well as the world, with a renewed sense of vigour, confidence, and hope. I examine Kashmiri fictional and non-fictional life narratives, which, I argue, perform the work of human rights advocacy and make human rights claims. This work is a pioneering study of Kashmiri literary and autobiographical narratives within the framework of human rights advocacy, practice, and discourse.

Human Rights and Literature

The language of human rights is everywhere. Michael Ignatieff famously argued that human rights are the “dominant moral vocabulary in foreign affairs” in the post-cold war world (Ignatieff, “Is the”). “These days it is usually not long,” writes Andrew Clapham, “before a problem is expressed as a human rights issue” (1). For better or for worse, human rights is now the “dominant and fashionable vocabulary for thinking about emancipation” and as such it “crowds out other ways of understanding harm and recompense” (D. Kennedy 115). Human rights have come to “enjoy a near monopoly on emancipatory and utopian discourse in a post-communist and post-industrialist era” (Hoffmann 82). In line with this, Samuel Moyn states that, human rights are a “recognizably utopian program: for the political standards it champions and the emotional passion it inspires, this program draws on the image of a place that has not yet been called into being” (1). An-Naim defines human rights as “moral and political entitlements that are due to all human beings equally, by virtue of their humanity, and without any distinction on such grounds as race, sex, religion, or national origin” (100). Being human is the only prerequisite to claiming and receiving these rights (An-Naim 100). Human rights, according to Jolly, help us envision a human subject who is “protected by the universal jurisdiction of the law of humanity. Everyone can suffer, everyone flourish” (Jolly 6).

In line with this, Lynn Hunt writes that “Human rights require three interlocking qualities: rights must be *natural* (inherent in human beings); *equal* (the same for everyone); and *universal* (applicable everywhere)” (20). According to her, these aspects of human rights, such as their naturalness, equality, and universality, initially found “political expression . . . in the American Declaration of Independence in 1776 and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen of 1789” (21). The American Declaration of Independence proclaimed that “all men are created equal” and as such have “unalienable rights” (Hunt 21). The French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, in likeness to this, “incarnated the promise of universal human rights” and declared that “Men are born and remain free and equal in rights” (Hunt 17, 21). In the 1760s, the French coined the expression “rights of man,” (*droits de l’homme*) which was distinctive from the English term for rights, namely

natural rights, insofar as the latter had “too many possible meanings (23–24). By the 1780s, the idea of “the rights of man” had crossed over into the English language as well (24). Two centuries later, the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which declared that, “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights,” and Hunt argues that the similarities in language between the French Declaration and the UDHR are noteworthy (17). This ushered in a new era of universal human rights, and the UN website lays out the importance of the UDHR in the following words:

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is a milestone document in the history of human rights. Drafted by citizens with different legal and cultural backgrounds from all regions of the world, the Declaration was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris on 10th December 1948, as a common standard of achievements for all peoples and its nations. It sets out, for the first time, fundamental human rights to be universally protected.
(UN General Assembly)

As a language, human rights is ‘spoken’ by diverse sets of actors. For laypersons, the invocation of human rights is an ethical and upstanding demand for the curtailment of injustices against human beings (Clapham 1). In fact, there has been a “long-standing contest between human rights lawyers, foundational thinkers of human rights – moral philosophers, anthropologists, historians . . . and simple ‘users’ of the language, on who is the principle owner of the discourse” (Hoffmann 83). In *Human Rights and Empire*, Costas Douzinas states that human rights language has been “adopted by the right and the left, the north and the south, the state and the pulpit, the minister and the rebel” (33).

Human rights language is also invoked and studied in many different fields such as “law, morality, culture, politics, history, sociology, anthropology and religion,” and according to Hoffmann, law, culture and morality are the most relevant ones (Hoffmann 92). For him, human rights are a discursive formation constituted by all three:

Human rights can be seen as . . . a discursive formation, made up of several distinct discourses, and itself constituted by a host of actors, practices and institutions, which do not necessarily speak the same dialect (of human rights), yet provide the space within which human rights discourse unfolds. Law, morality and culture are alternatives which cannot be translated into each other, but which are completely equivalent in that they cover the same ‘thing’, if only from different perspectives. That ‘thing’, human rights is a master signified, lurking behind each constitutive paradigm, and yet being signified by all three of them together.

(Hoffmann 95)

According to Levy and Sznajder, human rights discourse should be seen as both a “cultural and political force that is significantly reconfiguring the basis of legitimate sovereignty, the scope of political responsibility, and forms of belonging” (5). An-Naim argues that “[t]he concept, content and context of human rights are challenging to self-contained academic disciplines because the very nature of human rights involves human experiences that are too complex and intricate for any discipline to fully understand and work with” (108). He suggests that the universality of human rights demands that the study of human rights extend to different disciplines, and by this token, he considers interdisciplinarity to be “integral to human rights at a conceptual as well as practical level” (98–99). Literary texts are cultural products and could to an extent be subsumed under the “culture” part of the discursive formation of human rights. However, recent scholarship in the field of “human rights and literature” has proposed making space for this emerging interdiscipline, and for analyzing it on its own terms, rather than as yet another facet of cultural production and practice.

Two edited books, namely *Theoretical Perspectives on Human Rights and Literature* (2012) edited by Elizabeth Swanson Goldberg and Alexandra Schultheis Moore, and *The Routledge Companion to Human Rights and Literature* (2016) edited by Sophia McClennen and Alexandra Schultheis Moore, have been instrumental in defining the bounds of the interdiscipline, probing the conceptual overlaps and contradictions that underline the field, and mapping out fertile areas of academic and scholarly inquiry within it. Goldberg and Moore outline the scope of their edited volume by highlighting the primary focus of their contributors who “share attention to the ways in which literary readings of human rights discourses (fictional, poetic, testimonial, legal, political, economic, journalistic, cinematic) may illuminate both the limitations of those discourses and the imaginative possibilities of alternative frameworks” (3). The 2006 *PMLA* special issue on “The Humanities in Human Rights: Critique, Language, Politics” is also signposted as an important one, in laying out the contours of this nascent field (2). In 2009, the journal *Comparative Literature Studies* produced a special issue on “Human Rights and Literary Forms” with the aim of

elicit[ing] work that explored the relationship between storytelling, literary representation, cultural narratives, and human rights (understood as law, as discourse, and as practice) – that considered the role that literature and the arts have played and continue to play in fostering the ideological scaffolding of rights discourse.

(10)

‘Human rights and literature’ is a primarily US-based specialism, the emergence of which was aided by a succinct shift in the “political, social,

cultural and intellectual landscapes” following September 11th (2). However, according to Joseph Slaughter, “the rise of personal story politics and memoir culture in the 1970s and 1980s coincided with mass movements for decolonization, civil rights, women’s rights and sexual freedoms,” meaning that the ground for the field of ‘human rights and literature’ was laid much earlier than 9/11 (xiii-xiv). Along with this, Slaughter also identifies the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Amnesty International in 1977 as a “dramatic turn to personal stories in the context of human rights struggles” (xiv). Amnesty is responsible for making storytelling central to the business of human rights advocacy insofar as it initiated the process of developing “literary methods for mobilizing public opinion (the personal story) and focusing it on repressive regimes (the mass letter-writing campaign) that themselves depended heavily on paper” (xii).

According to Pramod K. Nayar, narratives in the field of rights can be defined as “literary texts where the human subject’s social ontology is eroded, and which therefore implicitly demonstrate how the subject can only develop and grow in conditions that sustain life” (xiii). Joseph Slaughter argues that amongst the different genres of literature, the novel, particularly the Bildungsroman, has been useful in articulating and advocating for the rights of human beings. This genre, as per Slaughter, is particularly effective in the way it “inverts the affirmative rights claim of the idealist genre by publicizing the discrepancy between the rhetoric of liberty, equality and fraternity and the inegalitarian social formations and relations in which that rhetoric is put into practice” (182). Crystal Parikh’s *Writing Human Rights* focuses on human rights through the “ethical deliberations staged in narratives authored by contemporary American writers of colour,” probing the forms of subjectivities and communities imagined in this strain of minor literature (2). In line with Slaughter, she too elevates the Bildungsroman as a transnationally mobile human rights form that is “endlessly transposable across the globe” and of special relevance to American writers of colour insofar as it is deployed by them to produce the figure of the subject of human rights (21–22).

In recent scholarship, James Dawes identifies the US novel of human rights as a genre category that “tells myriad stories” but typically follows “two different kinds of plots: the justice plot or the escape plot” (22). The justice plot, he posits, is related to the detective novel and involves “a narrative of return” in which a human rights atrocity occurs and is subsequently investigated (22–23). On the other hand, the escape plot looks to the picaresque and features a “narrative of departure” in which incremental human rights violations ultimately lead to flight from the damning situation (22–23). The *Routledge Companion to Human Rights and Literature* dedicates an entire section to the question of generic form in the field of human rights, designating a chapter each to human rights forms such as the slave narrative, oral tradition, poetry, photography,

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autobiography, and graphic novels and deconstructs the way in which these genres constrain and contain the story that is being narrated.

Human rights regimes are closely related to human rights advocacy. McClennan and Moore even define human rights in terms of their links with advocacy and activism:

The concept of human rights is at once an idea, a set of discursive norms, a legal practice, and a political claim; it attaches to a sense of community and to the construction of the victimized other; and it depends on storytelling and on practical political advocacy.

(1)

Kay Schaffer and Sidonie Smith establish a link between advocacy campaigns and human rights:

In the 1960s, group action and advocacy led to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1969). In the 1980s, women's and feminist activism led to the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1981). In the 1990s, trade union and indigenous advocacy led to the adoption of the International Labour Organization Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (1991) and The Draft Declaration on The Rights of Indigenous People (1993). . . . In this evolving culture of rights, personal witnessing plays a central role in the formulation of new rights protections.

(*Human Rights* 16)

In other words, human rights advocacy has the ability to dictate and change existing law. If literary life narratives are used as a means of human rights advocacy, then they too effectively have the potential, if not to alter, at least to offer critical commentary on the content and application of types of legislation. Personal stories have the power to question legal regimes that make the emergence of this particular interdiscipline of human rights and literature timelier and more significant.

The Language of Human Rights in Kashmir

Kashmiri literature in English highlights the human rights violations that ordinary Kashmiris have had to face in the Valley of Kashmir, especially since the troubled 1990s. I argue that the Kashmiri life narratives discussed in this book are a form of human rights literature that champions the rights of the Kashmiris to universal human rights and dignity. The language of human rights is not alien to Kashmiris. In fact, the emancipatory vocabulary of human rights has been deployed in socio-political discourse in order to legitimize the cause of the Kashmiris and to make

it more intelligible for wider publics since 1948. Following partition, the UN passed a series of resolutions in an attempt to mediate the Kashmir issue and to offer a resolution for the conflict that has served as a consistent flashpoint between India and Pakistan in the last seven decades (Ahmad). One of the key recommendations made by the United Nations was to suggest the organizing of a UN-administered plebiscite through which the opinion of the people of the state of Jammu and Kashmir on the issue of accession could be ascertained (Schofield xii).

With the dawn of the human rights era and the close involvement of the UN in the region, the vocabulary of human rights also entered the Kashmiri public sphere in the late 1940s. The popular demand for *azadi* (freedom) in Kashmir is frequently translated into a demand for “self-determination,” which directly echoes the language of human rights. The right to self-determination is believed to be an “integral element of basic human rights and fundamental freedoms” (UN General Assembly). Even though the United Nations was never successful in resolving the Kashmir issue, or even in terms of offering a sustainable path to long-term reconciliation, the words “United Nations, self-determination and plebiscite . . . are an integral [part] of the Kashmiri political lexicon” (Ahmad). The Kashmiri rapper M.C Kash mentions the promise of plebiscite in his rap ballad *I Protest*, which went viral in the Valley in 2010: “But when The Blood Spills Over, You’ll Stand An’ Fight / Threads of Deceit Woven around A Word of Plebiscite” (110). This hip hop song highlights the penetration of human rights language into everyday discourse, including musical discourse, and draws attention to its sustained relevance within contemporary Kashmir, particularly amongst educated, English-speaking youth, such as Kash and his Kashmiri fans.

Life Narratives

In the Kashmiri literary prose discussed in this book, Kashmiri cultural practitioners also adopt the language of human rights. Different types of conventional literary forms are used to do human rights advocacy and of these, life narratives in particular, have become “one of the most potent vehicles” for performing the work of human rights (Schaffer and Smith, *Human Rights* 1). Life writing or life narratives are “documents or fragments of documents written out of a life” and include autobiographical forms, oral narratives, testimonies, slave narratives, confessional works and anthropological life histories (Kadar 5, 152). Smith and Watson define “life writing” as a “general term for writing that takes a life, one’s own or another’s, as its subject. Such writing can be biographical, novelistic, historical, or explicitly self-referential and therefore autobiographical” (*Reading Autobiography* 4).

John Riquelme argues for broadening the term “life narrative” to include “biographical, autobiographical [and] fictive” texts, particularly

the fictional Bildungsroman, because the latter, according to him, has a special prominence within the “modernist canon of life narrative” (464–65). Gillian Whitlock also includes fictional texts under the rubric of life narrative but draws a distinction between fictional life narrative such as autobiographical fiction, novels, and Bildungsromane, and ‘non-fictional’ life narrative such as biographies, memoirs, journals, prison narratives, letters, and testimonies (201). Similarly, in this book, I consider both fictional and non-fictional Kashmiri texts as examples of life narrative, with a particular emphasis on fiction and the Bildungsroman. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the coming of age story or Bildungsroman is a sub-genre of the novel, which has the “formative years or spiritual education” of the protagonist, as its central theme (“Bildungsroman”). I will further explicate on the terms *Bildung* and Bildungsroman in Chapter one of this book.

Life narratives have been “contributing directly and indirectly” to different human rights campaigns (Schaffer and Smith, *Human Rights* 28). The work of human rights advocacy usually involves the “promot[ion] of a cause, principled ideas or norms” and the bringing about of broad “policy changes” with the underlying assumption that the human rights advocate or defender is speaking on behalf of and defending the cause of someone else (Keck and Sinnink 8–9). Human rights advocacy broadly refers to the practice of “speaking out on human rights issues and taking action to improve a situation” (“Advocating for human rights”). Human rights advocates may work for an organization or an NGO but may in principle also be lay members of society. According to the Office of The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), a human rights activist is a professional or a non-professional lay-actor advocating on behalf of a victim of atrocity (“Who is”).

Kashmiri writers and human rights activists also use stories to do human rights advocacy, but radically stretch the generic bounds of the types of stories that are typically assumed by scholars to be engaged in the work of drawing attention to human rights violations in troubled areas of the globe. In selected Kashmiri life narratives, human rights violations are plotted into the narrative trajectory of the human subject’s life in order to contextualize the loss of human rights in visceral, descriptive, and evocative terms.

Human Rights and Pleasure

In Freudian psychoanalysis, human beings possess, and to an extent, follow “the pleasure principle,” seeking to maximize their pleasure and to avoid sources of pain (Freud 1). Sara Ahmed, in her work *The Promise of Happiness*, states that, “Happiness is consistently described as the object of human desire, as being what we aim for, as being what gives purpose, meaning and order to human life” (1). The US declaration of

Independence famously lists “life, liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness” as part of the inalienable rights of men (“Declaration”). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) refers to the “enjoyment” of specific kinds of human rights as the entitlement of every individual, regardless of caste, creed, race or nationality (UN General Assembly). The Preamble emphasizes the right of all human beings to “enjoy freedom of speech and belief” (UN General Assembly). In addition to this, Articles 14, 25 and 27 of the UDHR outline the rights of all human beings to different forms of enjoyment.

According to these clauses, all human beings should be able to “enjoy asylum from persecution,” “enjoy . . . social protection,” “enjoy the arts” and “the cultural life of the community” (UN General Assembly). The word ‘enjoy’ in the UDHR does not only mean ‘to have’ but is also linked to the notion of enjoyment, pleasure, and gratification. The UDHR seems to make the point, however implicitly, that human rights are enjoyable and that we should all have access to them not only because the possibility of losing them is so unspeakably horrific, but also because having them brings us happiness and makes our lives worth living.

Happiness and pleasure appear to be central to the shared human experience and there seems to be a tenable, and yet under-emphasized, relationship between human rights and pleasure. Brian Orend states that “[t]he point and purpose of ethics and justice is to advance overall happiness and well-being among people” (89). Referring to the consequentialist justification for human rights, he argues that

societies that respect human rights are societies where human happiness is more in evidence than in societies disrespectful of them. People who live in rights-respecting societies are certainly better off, and generally happier, than those suffering under conditions of rights violations. . . . if people in a society care about their own overall happiness and well-being, they ought to ensure that their own behaviour, and the social institutions they share, respect human rights. In general, we are all better off – have a better and more consistent shot at enjoying life – if we live in a society that respects human rights.

(Orend 90)

In 2011, the UN passed a resolution titled “Happiness: Towards a Holistic Approach to Development.” The resolution recognizes “the pursuit of happiness as a fundamental human goal” and invites member states to “pursue the elaboration of additional measures that better capture the pursuit of happiness and well-being in development and with a view to guiding their public policies” (“Resolution”). It identifies ‘happiness’ as one of the “Millennium Development Goals” and links it to “economic growth that promotes sustainable development, poverty eradication, happiness, and well-being of all peoples” (“Resolution”). At the

same time, the drafters of the resolution are careful to not establish too close a link between economic development with happiness indicators and the resolution notes that “gross domestic product indicator was not designed to and does not adequately reflect the happiness of people in a country” (“Resolution”). In the spirit of foregrounding the importance of happiness within the human rights paradigm and as a defining goal for the millennium, the UN adopted a separate resolution in 2012, which declared March 20th as the International Day of Happiness. The resolution recognizes “the relevance of happiness and well-being as universal goals and aspirations in the lives of human beings around the world and the importance of their recognition in public policy objectives” (“Resolutions”). These resolutions fall short of formulating a universal human right to happiness but are still successful in highlighting the importance of pleasure and happiness within the existing human rights paradigm. They call for a reassessment of the central goals of human rights regimes, based on the lived experience of human beings across the globe, and also adopt a “consequentialist justification” of human rights (Orend 73). In other words, human rights are important because they make human beings happy and, as such, the promulgation of legislation should be grounded in the protection and enhancement of the happiness and everyday pleasures of human beings.

Jennifer Oriel argues that “Within the growing international discourse of sexual rights, it is increasingly recommended that sexual pleasure should be recognized as a human right” (392). Here, pleasure within a human rights framework is posited as the human right to sexual fulfillment, rather than as a more generalized and holistic notion of personal happiness and enjoyment. “Sexual equality,” she states, “has been included as a theoretical goal because it is essential to the meaningful expression of human rights” (393). She draws attention to the work of a North African advocacy organization, HERA (Health, Empowerment, Rights and Accountability), which draws a clear link between human rights, sexuality, and pleasure:

Sexual rights are a fundamental element of human rights. They encompass the right to experience pleasurable sexuality, which is essential in and of itself, and, at the same time, is a fundamental vehicle of communication and love between people. Sexual rights include the right to liberty and autonomy in the responsible exercise of sexuality.

(393–94)

According to Oriel, HERA places “sexual rights firmly within the scope of international feminist and human rights activism” by recognizing the importance of sexual pleasure within the human rights vision (394). Within the UDHR, we have observed that there is a recognition of the

human need to seek pleasure, and the centrality of pleasure and happiness. UN resolutions adopted around 2011 also highlight the growing tendency to articulate human rights vis-à-vis their ability to induce pleasure and happiness. The inclusion of sexual pleasure as a human right further signals the foregrounding of pleasure and enjoyment in the way that human rights are articulated and enshrined.

But can we observe an equivalent turn towards happiness and pleasure, as organizing principles, in the realm of human rights advocacy, in the way that human rights are discussed, promoted, and protected around the globe? Human rights stories, according to Schaffer and Smith, can generate “embodied pain, shame, distress, anguish, humiliation, anger, rage, fear and terror” in both the narrators and listeners (*Human Rights* 6). However, I propose that human rights agents may conversely seek to induce pleasure as a means of advancing their advocacy, generating sympathy in their audiences, and creating publicity. I am suggesting that the *idea* of rights as pleasure and the *narration* of rights as pleasure within human rights activism needs to be probed, and in accordance with this, there needs to be a re-theorization of the normative definition of rights narratives that are capable of doing advocacy on a global level. In reality the repertoire of stories that can potentially function within human rights frameworks is much more expansive. Stories that deal with pain and trauma, but also happiness and pleasure, could also qualify as part of ‘human rights literature’ and be used for human rights claim-making and for advocating for the rights of victims of atrocity.

For Bakhtin, laughter, in medieval times, “was as universal as seriousness; it was directed at the whole world, at history, at all societies, at ideology. It was the world’s second truth extended to everything and from which nothing is taken away” (84). While there is plenty of seriousness in the way scholars characterize human rights literature, there is little room for the type of laughter or enactment of pleasure that reveals a “second truth” (84). Bowditch and Vissicaro, in their edited book *Performing Utopia*, characterize the body as a “landscape of pleasure and excess” and quoting Bakhtin, advocate for a recognition of the “indestructible joie de vivre” of carnival, which discloses and reveals “a deeper reality” (Bowditch and Vissicaro 11, 142). For them, “beneath the eruption of laughter and the grotesque body exists a more serious engagement with history, race relations, sexual construction and the performance of the self” (11). In this book, I want to draw attention to the joie de vivre of having rights and to highlight how narratives of pleasure can, in effect, be used to foreground the spectre of pain and the loss of human rights entitlements.

In her article “On Postcolonial Happiness,” Ananya Kabir probes the place of “happiness within postcolonial discourse” (35). “Theories and analyses of postcolonial subjectivity” she writes, “focus overwhelmingly on the ‘unhappiness effect’: trauma and its after effects, oppression,

displacement and deracination, and pervasive melancholia as the result of long histories of being colonized or colonizing cultures” (35–36). She proposes the “reclaiming of happiness as political, embodied, inclusive and collective pleasures,” particularly within the field of postcolonial discourse (41).

Smith and Schaffer highlight how stories told within the normative human rights advocacy context, either in the form of published life narratives or first-person testimonies contained in human rights reports are of a specific nature:

[They are] particular kinds of stories [usually] strong, emotive often chronicling degradation, brutalization, exploitation and physical violence; stories that testify to the denial of subjectivity and loss of group identities. Sometimes these stories are told in the immediacy of catastrophic conflict, sometimes only years or decades after the recollected event. Some stories, formerly locked in silence, open wounds and retrigger traumatic feelings once they are told.

(*Human Rights* 4)

I propose that we broaden the scholarly definition of ‘human rights literature’ or ‘narratives in the field of human rights’ to include stories that do not only focus on experiences of pain and physical suffering but also happiness and pleasure. Along with this, the types of stories in the forms of first-person testimonies that are included within traditional human rights reports can also be expanded to include stories of interrupted pleasure and happiness. According to Carrie Hamilton, the field of cultural memory for example, is dominated by “bad memories (trauma, mourning, melancholia) and bad feelings (guilt, shame, anger)” (65). This is because “the strong influence of the trauma/testimony model has led to an emphasis on the suffering of victims of past catastrophes” (65). In contrast to this, she advocates a turn towards “happy memories” and argues that, “memories of past oppression [need not] necessarily preclude the recollection of happiness and hope” (67). Similarly, stories and life narratives engaged in the work of human rights advocacy can also move beyond the idiom of brutalization and pain and focus on the lived experiences of pleasure or the ‘happy memories’ of human rights victims, to use Carrie Hamilton’s phrase (65).

Elaine Scarry, in *The Body in Pain*, writes about pain’s visceral and all-encompassing ability to obliterate human consciousness:

The objects of consciousness, from the most expansive to the most intimate, from those that exist in the space at the very limits of vision, to those that exist in the space immediately outside the boundaries of the body, from the Big Dipper down to Spain, and in through the realm of personal memories to the most abiding objects

of love and belief . . . all in one patient rush are swept through and annihilated.

(32)

Pain and death are positioned in binary opposition to human consciousness, which manifests itself as the pleasure of “personal memories” and “objects of love and belief” (32). Torture and bodily agony destroy the possibility, and even the memory, of pleasure. Testimonies that focus only on these experiences, in some sense, reinforce and cement the logic of unbearable pain that seeks to erase the lived experiences and personal memories of the human subject. “World, self and voice” argues Scarry, “are lost, or nearly lost, through the intense pain of torture” (35). She draws attention to a fundamental limitation in the suffering-centred approach to human rights advocacy. By only including stories and testimonies of pain, human rights workers are not sufficiently able to mediate and undo the silence that bodily pain imposes upon the victim. Following Scarry, I argue that narratives that focus only on bodily suffering do not go far enough in re-articulating and restoring the “world, self and voice” of the human subject, which pain sought to destroy, but are only able to describe this process of annihilation. The profound humiliation and dehumanization that a human rights victim suffers as a result of undergoing corporeal torture and pain can only be fully remedied by restoring that subject’s remembrance of events, routines, and lived experiences pertaining to things other than the fact of pain.

Being able to recall and narrativize the “most abiding objects of love and belief,” the memory of which became effaced as a result of experiencing agonizing pain, restores the humanness and dignity of victims of atrocity (32). The narratives discussed in this book, I argue, support the case for expanding the generic limits of the stories that can operate in the field of human rights. These texts represent human rights abuses as dramatic interruptions in the everyday routines and joyful pursuits of their protagonists, rather than as de-contextualized acts of physical cruelty and torture. They re-locate pleasure as a thematic concern and a plotting device within stories that are used to publicize human rights violations and protect human rights. Happiness, according to Ahmed, is contagious and can be passed around and tossed back and forth (39). Anna Gibbs, for instance, argues that “Bodies can catch feelings as easily as catch fire: affect leaps from one body to another, evoking tenderness, inciting shame, igniting rage, exciting fear – in short communicable affect can inflame nerves and muscles in a conflagration of every conceivable type of passion” (“Contagious”). Similarly, the recent Kashmiri narratives mentioned in this book are meant to do more than “open wounds and re-trigger traumatic feelings”; they also invite readers to “catch feelings” of happiness and interrupted happiness, and to participate in the political effort of restoring the human rights and pleasures of Kashmiri subjects.

As such, the Kashmiri stories discussed in this book take us beyond the narrative of victimization and the trope of the “body in pain” that dominates storytelling within human rights advocacy contexts, particularly in human rights reports (Scarry, *The Body* 47). These narratives are a class of human rights stories that do not exclusively thematize atrocity, corporeal violence, and torture but also aesthetic beauty, lived experience, and sensual pleasures.

In the Introduction to the *Oxford Handbook of Happiness*, happiness is defined as

a common-sense, lay representation of well-being. The second meaning of this term refers to a so-called *hedonic* or pleasure-centered aspect of well-being. *Flourishing*, on the other hand, refers to an aspect of well-being concerned with growth and self-transcendence . . . *Well-being* itself is an umbrella term for a number of concepts related to human wellness.

(David et al. 3)

I use the terms ‘enjoyment,’ ‘pleasure,’ and ‘happiness’ interchangeably throughout the book.

Positive and Negative Rights

I posit that the stories that are recognized by scholars as falling within the ambit of ‘human rights literature’ are those that focus on negative human rights instead of positive human rights.

Negative rights are defined as the “rights to be left alone” (Cook et. al 152). Negative human rights “entitle individuals to behave as they consider right, without subjection to regulation or control by governmental agencies” (152). On the other hand, positive human rights “depend on governmental or other accommodation and provision beyond an individual’s own resources” (152). They rely on “the duty of governmental or other intervention by affirmative acts to facilitate the enjoyment of rights” (152).

Tomuschat draws a distinction between negative and positive human rights on the basis of generation:

Human rights of the first generation are negative human rights, or civil liberties, which enjoin states to abstain from interfering with personal freedom. Freedom and security of person or freedom of speech are paradigmatic examples of this class of rights. When referring to human rights of the second generation (or ‘positive’ rights) the speaker has in mind economic, or social rights such as the right to work or the right to social security, which entitle individuals or collectivities to certain goods or social services.

(25)

In general, negative human rights include “classical human rights to life, liberty and property” (Mieth 173). Negative rights are premised on the fact that others do not interfere with, or infringe them, whereas positive human rights demand that certain goods or services are actively provided to the human subject, usually by the state and its institutions (Skoble). I have suggested that only stories that focus on and give voice to the loss or violation of negative human rights, such as the right to be safe from “arbitrary arrest, detention or exile” and to be protected from “inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment,” to quote clauses from the UDHR (UN General Assembly), are recognized as human rights narratives by scholars. However, the UDHR also enshrines our human right to “enjoy” positive rights, such as the right to have access to a vibrant cultural life, or as stated in Article 22, the right to “economic, social and cultural rights” that might be “indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality” (UN General Assembly). It is my argument that Kashmiri cultural practitioners also articulate the importance of positive human rights in their life narratives.

Instead of narrativizing the usurpation of negative human rights, the Kashmiri narratives under consideration here explicate and exemplify Kashmiris’ desire for positive rights, including the right to produce and claim “artistic production,” and to “participate in the cultural life of the community” (UN General Assembly). Human rights infringements are not depicted as incidents that only curtail negative rights, but also as incidents that hinder a Kashmiri subject’s access to positive human rights, especially the pleasures and rhythms of everyday agrarian, social, literary, and cultural life in the region. The normative definition of a human rights narrative only permits stories that focus on human rights violations – and that too of only negative rights – to qualify as human rights literature. I consider this definition to be narrow and exclusionary insofar as stories that narrativize positive rights and/or focus on pleasurable lived experience and “happy memories” are not considered useful for the purpose of making human rights claims. I use Kashmiri life narratives to re-conceptualize the conventional generic bounds of what qualifies as a human rights narrative.

I have chosen to focus on *Anglophone* life narratives because English-language prose is emerging as the chosen mode of expression for this upcoming generation of Kashmiri cultural practitioners who make use of the generic conventions of different Anglophone literary genres in order to compose their narratives (Shaftel). The Kashmiri rap artist, M.C Kash, in an interview with the BBC, attested to the strategic adoption of English in the artistic and cultural forms that have emerged from Kashmir in recent years: “English is a universal language. Kashmiris know how they have suffered. So, if I went on to rap about it in Kashmiri, that would be useless” (Kash). By speaking in English, Kashmiris extend their addressees from Koshur-speaking local publics to English-speaking

regional and international publics who have become increasingly responsive and receptive to Kashmiri voices in recent times. Basharat Peer writes that only “Kashmir sees the unedited Kashmir” (“Kashmir Unrest” 44). By writing in English, Kashmiris give those outside Kashmir, who have never travelled there, or even heard of it, a glimpse into the physical and psychosocial topography of this unedited Kashmir.

This book focuses on life narratives that are set in the disputed territory of Jammu and Kashmir and that have been composed by authors of both Kashmiri and Indian origin who either identify as Kashmiri and bear filial ties to the region, or affiliate themselves with Kashmiris while operating outside Kashmir, either in India, or in diaspora in parts of North America and Europe. Authors of the texts considered in this study are categorized not only as ‘Kashmiri’ but ‘Kashmircentric’ since some of the writers under discussion do not share a common Kashmiri ethnicity but nevertheless choose to stand in solidarity with Kashmiri subjects and are part of the cultural effort to shift the narrative and language on Kashmir (Kabir, “Postpastoral”). In this thesis, I choose to retain both ‘Kashmiri’ and ‘Kashmircentric’ as identifying labels to categorize this upcoming generation of writers, human rights activists, artists, and public intellectuals because, in the case of certain writers, the term ‘Kashmiri’ does not adequately encompass their multiple, overlapping identities.

This book develops a theoretical framework with which to analyze and classify new strains of writing that are being composed by Kashmiris/Indians in Kashmir as well as abroad. The list of contemporary Kashmiri narratives includes Sudha Koul’s *The Tiger Ladies* (2002), Jaspreet Singh’s *Seventeen Tomatoes: Tales from Kashmir* (2004) and *Chef* (2012), Salman Rushdie’s *Shalimar the Clown* (2008), Anjum Zamarud Habib’s prison narrative *Prisoner No. 100* (2010), Mirza Waheed’s *The Collaborator* (2011) and *The Book of Gold Leaves* (2014), Siddhartha Gigoo’s *Garden of Solitude* (2011), Rahul Pandita’s *Our Moon has Bloodclots* (2013), Shahnaz Bashir’s *The Half-Mother* (2014) and *Scattered Souls* (2016), Nitasha Kaul’s *Residue* (2015), four collections of fictional and non-fictional texts titled, *From House to Home: Writings of Kashmiri Pandits in Exile* (2015), *A Long Dream Home: The Persecution, Exile and Exodus of Kashmiri Pandits* (2016) and *Of Occupation and Resistance: Writing from Kashmir* (2015), *Do You Remember Kunan Poshpora* (2016), Suvir Kaul’s collection of essays, *Of Gardens and Graves* (2015) and Arundhati Roy’s *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017).

A few of the texts listed above are translations of literary texts originally published in the local languages, Koshur or Urdu. Owing to the success and international visibility of Anglophone Kashmiri life narratives, literary texts in the local languages are also being translated into English and marketed to a local and international readership (Shaftel). Suvir Kaul’s collection of essays, for instance, contains translations of poems which were originally published in the regional vernacular, Koshur.

Similarly, Zamarud Habib's prison narrative, originally composed in Urdu, was translated for a wider audience into English by the translator, Sahba Husain (Shaftel). In addition to this, regional Kashmiri poetry is also being translated into English and published by international publishing houses. In 2011 for example, the poems of Kashmiri poet Lal Ded were translated into English and published by Penguin Books and in the following year, the poems of the 17th century Kashmiri poet Tahir Ghana were also translated from local Koshur into the English language and were made available to a broader, regional as well as transnational readership (Shaftel).

Moment of Possibility

Since 2008, Kashmiri subjects have also positioned themselves as equal stakeholders in the Kashmir conflict through their participation in *intifada*-style street movements and through the composition of literary and cultural works (Parthasarathy). Both these acts of citizen activism and engagement were aimed at making Kashmiri voices prominent and visible in the national as well as the transnational public spheres. Anglophone literary works, many of which were published around 2008, enabled Kashmiri cultural practitioners to shift the discussion on Kashmir from the political boardrooms to the metropolitan, English-speaking book market and allowed ordinary Kashmiris to participate in the process of political opinion and decision-making that impacts the fabric of their everyday existence.

This proliferation of new writing from Kashmir is part of the experimentation with cultural modes of resistance that began to dominate the scene since around 2008 (Kak xvii). Alongside creative literature, other forms of artistic expression including films, paintings, digital and installation art, digital novels, rap songs, and online poetry began to re-shape the poetics and politics of resistance in Kashmir during this time (Kak xvi). Poetry, films, visual art and a number of blogs, journals, e-papers, and social networking websites emerged as important means of political and cultural engagement. Sanjay Kak's *Jashn-e-Azadi* (2007) or "How we Celebrate Freedom" and Siddhartha Gigoo's *The Last Day* (2013) explored the roots of conflict in Kashmir. Kak's and Gigoo's artistic output exemplifies the eclecticism and intermediality that characterizes Kashmiri cultural production. Gigoo, for example, composes poetry, prose (of which his novel, *The Garden of Solitude*, is a prominent example) and essays but has also dabbled in film, whereas Kak alternatively experiments with scholarly and journalistic writing and documentaries.

In general, political commentators note that armed militancy in the region has been on the wane since the late 1990s (Shukla). However, young Kashmiris still take up arms against the Indian state, and their anger remains nearly as visceral and acute as it was during the volatile

1990s when armed insurgency broke out in the Valley (Bose, “The evolution”). The mass popularity of militants, such as Burhan Wani, a youthful HM (Hizb-ul-Mujahideen) militant, who used to have a skilfully managed Facebook page and a sizeable local following, remains a fact to be contended with. Wani’s killing at the hands of the Indian security forces in July 2016 led to widespread demonstrations across Kashmir, and to an outpour of fury and anger (Baweja). Brushes with violence remain a part of the everyday existence of ordinary Kashmiri citizens and disrupt the rhythms and rituals of daily life in the region. Local militants are heralded like folk heroes and they continue to enjoy popular support, sympathy, and adulation from the population (Bukhari).

Wani and his group of militants were brazen in their support for militancy, uploading pictures of themselves posing with guns onto their social media accounts (Baweja). These pictures went viral, and according to *The Hindustan Times*, Wani’s Facebook following is a symptom of the emergence of a “new militant brigade in the region,” which is “embracing the power of social media and is unafraid of revealing its identity” (Baweja). Disappearances, curfews, and crackdowns still characterize life in Kashmir and the armed forces still act with impunity in disciplining and controlling Kashmiri bodies. Burhan Wani, for instance, was drawn to militancy after his brother Khalid was tortured by Indian security forces and succumbed to his injuries (Baweja). Kashmiris remain “hemmed in by bunkers, curfews and internet bans” and while navigating this matrix of human rights issues, young Kashmiris in particular still feel the lure of a life of militancy (Baweja). Around 60 percent of the population of Kashmir is under the age of thirty, and while the guerilla warfare is not as intense now as it was in the last two decades, this young demographic remains viscerally angry and politically and socially disenfranchised (Baweja).

I argue that the year 2008 marked a moment of possibility, an efflorescence of political expression and cultural resistance in the Valley. This moment is worthy of being unpacked. Since around 2008, alternative forms of engagement and protest, primarily conducted through journalistic, literary, and social media platforms, emerged as a means of resisting and speaking out against the draconian policies of the Indian state in Kashmir and of drawing attention to the human rights abuses being systematically perpetrated in the region. Basharat Peer, the acclaimed Kashmiri writer and journalist, while speaking in 2011 at Pakistan’s most prolific literary event, the Karachi Literary Festival, discussed these shifting forms of protest in Kashmir:

1990 was a time when Kashmir didn’t know much [about] what violence really is or what it does to you, as a society [and] as individuals. By 2008, we knew it all too well. We had seen violence; we had done violence. We had violence done to ourselves. So as a people, as

a society there was a lot of thinking about it. What it does do to you, how far does it take you?

(Peer)

Kashmiris increasingly began to develop new ways of protesting the Indian state's excesses in Kashmir and new mechanisms of political, social, and cultural engagement emerged. This resistance seemed to flow out of a growing disillusionment with the efficacy of violence as a form of protest, and weariness with the repercussions of both perpetrating and experiencing violence. As Kashmiri cultural practitioners were writing literary works in English and using the international vocabulary of human rights to articulate their claims, Kashmiri online magazines, such as *The Kashmir Walla* and literary journals such as *Kashmir Lit* became populated by poets describing and dissecting the experiences of violence in their everyday lives. In the 2011 edition of *Kashmir Lit*, a Kashmiri poet named Irtif Lone wrote about the trauma of losing a close friend: "lungs not breathing / Phone rang / Kashmiri music, his favourite song / he wasn't listening" (Lone). In an interview with the US-based program *Democracy Now!* Sanjay Kak described the transformation of the Kashmiri resistance movement as "cataclysmic in terms of what we saw on the street." He explained the significance of these changes in the following words:

It was also a moment which was accompanied by an explosion in writing about Kashmir . . . It was obvious to all of us [that] the stone-throwing on the street, the *intifada* on the street, was accompanied by an *intifada* of the mind . . . a churning, a release.

(Kak)

He highlighted how the adoption of new modes of protest by the Kashmiri *sang-baz*, the stone-throwers, was paralleled by a proliferation of literary and scholarly texts *on* and *about* Kashmir. Besides the publication of Kashmiri fictional and non-fictional life narratives, a collection of scholarly essays edited by Kak, titled *Until my Freedom Has Come* (2011), also contributed to the conversation on the changing poetics of resistance in Kashmir. Another anthology of writings followed suit, bearing the polemical title, *Kashmir: The Case for Freedom* (2011), which featured essays by Arundhati Roy and Tariq Ali, advocating the human rights of Kashmiris.

According to Pankaj Mishra, there were convergences between the "youth on the streets" and those "with their noses in books" (Mishra 6). In this way, he concurred with Kak's view, insofar as he observes parallels between the street protests and the intellectual activity unfolding in the region. "Life under political oppression," Mishra wrote, "has begun to yield, in the slow bitter way it does, a rich and intellectual harvest" (Mishra 6).

Kashmiri bloggers remain active on the blogosphere. According to the Indian news website, *The Quint*, Kashmir has a “thriving blogging culture” with nearly a hundred bloggers writing from the Valley of Kashmir on a diversity of subjects ranging from local politics, human rights, Kashmiri literature, cultural memory, and Kashmiri cuisine (Rattanpal). Online platforms such as *The Kashmir Walla* and *Kashmir Lit* continue to provide local and diasporic Kashmiris with the opportunity of contributing literary and non-literary pieces on issues related to Kashmir. In that sense, both these platforms function as alternative media sources that encourage citizen reporting, enabling political and artistic works which would otherwise be subjected to censorship, to be accessible to the general public. These Kashmiri activists and cultural practitioners are part of an emerging generation of young Kashmiri and Kashmircentric voices who have successfully managed to leverage their stories to both national and transnational publics and make Kashmir part of the global conversation again. The language with which Kashmir is discussed, written about, and narrativized has certainly altered. The emergence of alternative forms of dissent has highlighted the possibility of and the need for a dramatic re-negotiation of the forms and the discursive engagement between Kashmiris and the Indian state.

A new generation of Kashmiris is attempting to talk back to the state and provide an outlet to their discontent using different mechanisms, while simultaneously looking to access newer publics who may be sympathetic to their political plight. Cultural forms and practices are still being mobilized as vehicles for garnering political clout in both the regional and transnational public sphere by Kashmiri public intellectuals. In Kashmir, as in other regions of conflict and contestation, “culture and cultural resistance” is now playing a significant role in the “larger struggle” for survival and self-determination regardless of the prevailing state of armed militancy in the region (Harlow 10). Cultural resistance is defined as “the practice of using meanings and symbols, that is, culture, to contest and combat a dominant power, often constructing a different vision of the world in the process” (Duncombe, “Cultural Resistance”). According to some scholars, cultural resistance is considered “political resistance” because politics is “essentially a cultural discourse, a shared set of symbols and meanings, that we all abide by. If this is true, then the rewriting of that discourse – which is essentially what cultural resistance does – is a political act in itself” (Duncombe, *Cultural Resistance Reader* 6).

Recent events suggest that the political situation in Kashmir remains changeable, dynamic and highly unpredictable and as such, the need to dissect the evolving poetics of resistance is especially timely. In August 2019 the Indian government, under Prime Minister Narendra Modi and a parliament controlled by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), revoked Article 370 and Article 35 (A) of the Indian constitution, which ensured Kashmir’s special status within the Indian constitution and

allowed for a degree of political autonomy for the territory while placing legal barriers on non-Kashmiris from purchasing property in the state of Jammu and Kashmir (Ratcliffe; Sanghvi). Following the abrogation of these legal protections, the disputed state of Jammu and Kashmir was split into two provincial units – Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, 35000 military troops were brought into Kashmir, pro-independence Kashmiri leaders were arrested, or placed under house arrest, and widespread curfew was imposed (Ellis-Petersen; Kanjwal, “India’s”). In predictable and authoritarian fashion, which marks India’s descent into a blatantly (rather than covertly) Hindu-majoritarian state, intent on consuming the Kashmiri geo-body, and with it the inconvenient political aspirations of the Kashmiris, landline and cellular phone services were blocked, and internet services and cable television suspended, thus enforcing a complete communication blackout on the people of Kashmir (Ramachandran and Laskar).

As I write this, the curfew has entered its fourth month with no hope of respite on the horizon. Due to the lack of internet connectivity Kashmiris in the Valley have been pulled from WhatsApp, which automatically removes users who have been inactive for a period of 120 days (“Kashmir users”). In response to these draconian measures, Kashmiri public intellectuals have mobilized in the diaspora and are at the forefront of mounting a formidable cultural, intellectual, and epistemological resistance against the Indian occupation of Kashmir, and in making sure that the narrative on Kashmir is informed by voices from the Valley. One of the authors I examine in this book, Mirza Waheed, is part of Stand with Kashmir, a diaspora-driven grassroots organization that is closely allied with the people of Kashmir and committed to bringing about an end to the militarization in the region (“Experts”). In October 2019, the US House Subcommittee on Asia held a historic hearing on human rights in Asia with a special focus on Kashmir, and Nitasha Kaul, a Kashmiri writer and economist, author of the novel *Residue*, participated as a Kashmir expert at this hearing. In light of these emerging developments, it becomes even more exigent to valorize Kashmiri voices over statist Indian and Pakistani ones and to examine the cultural works of Kashmiri writers who have had a long-standing interest in issues of human and civil rights and representation in Kashmir.

Hafsa Kanjwal, in a recent article published on Al-Jazeera, states that the inadvertent effect of India’s revocation of Article 370 has been an internationalization of the Kashmir issue, and its reframing as a global issue rather than an internal, bilateral territorial dispute between India and Pakistan: “Ever since the Indian government revoked the region’s special status on August 5, imposed a communication blockade and precipitated fears of a settler-colonial project, the world’s most militarised zone has been internationalised in an unprecedented way” (Kanjwal, “The day”). The Kashmiri cultural practitioners considered in this

book have been leveraging their Anglophone life narratives to multiple local and transnational publics over the past decade to achieve exactly these ends: to reclaim the narrative on Kashmir beyond divisive and trite nationalisms and meaningfully re-insert it into the transnational political discourse. Their efforts continue to shape the current political climate in which, Kashmir, an invisible conflict, has managed to exercise a stranglehold over the global imagination. Kashmiri writers are engaged participants in their capacity as writers, scholars, journalists, and public intellectuals and it is apparent that Modi's Hindutva-inspired re-structuring and violent re-imagining of Kashmir and the Muslim body politic will be met with highly nuanced, Kashmiri and Kashmircentric cultural and political engagements and afterlives.

Narratives of Pleasure

I posit that Kashmiri cultural works offer *narratives of pleasure* rather than only ones of victimization and bodily pain in order to articulate human rights violations and to foreground the human experience. I have mentioned that the Kashmiri life narratives discussed in this book perform the work of human rights advocacy and make human rights claims. The promise of human rights is envisioned as unfettered access to localized pleasures and artistic practice; conversely, human rights violations are posited as interruptions in the pleasurable pursuits and self-development of the main subjects of these works. Instead of desiring only the bare minimum legal protections from physical defilement and corporeal harm, marginalized bodies are also represented as wanting micro-pleasures, the recuperation of small, incalculable, and innumerable losses.

The emerging generation of Kashmiri artists and activists, to be discussed in this book, also reclaim pleasure as a site of artistic and political action. They have developed narratives of pleasure in order to make human rights claims and to perform the work of human rights advocacy. The Kashmiri narratives discussed in this book advocate for the right of Kashmiris to have access to both positive and negative human rights ranging from a right to be protected from torture, to a right to enjoy works of art and culture. Human rights are shown to be important not only because losing them would lead to atrocities and physical pain but also because having human rights restores happiness and enjoyment in the lives of ordinary Kashmiris.

Human rights are posited as particular kinds of pleasures in the narratives treated in this book and the process of claiming human rights is represented as an act of claiming the entitlement to these different pleasures. Lori Allen states that there is a connection between "suffering and political entitlement" within the practice of human rights activism (162). She posits that "representations of suffering" produce a "rights-bearing suffering subject" (162). According to Rosanne Kennedy, "the suffering

subject is . . . palatable to a Western audience and more likely to generate compassionate responses” (61). In contrast to this, the Kashmiri life narratives considered in this book represent the rights-bearing subject as one who is desirous of happiness and sensitive to any loss in pleasure. In other words, pleasure and enjoyment are re-signified as the *affective* result of being a rights-bearing body and the loss of pleasure in the life narratives discussed in this book is connected to the loss of specific human rights. The narratives that I consider work under the assumption that pleasure and the desire to seek pleasures, especially ones that are denied to us, is an essential part of the human experience. The idea is that all of us, regardless of our specific national, ethnic, gender, religious, linguistic differences, wish to lead fulfilling and pleasurable lives and to seek out happiness in and through our different pursuits. While our ability to access enjoyment and pleasure may not be equal or equitable – an inequality the works discussed here acknowledge and seek to draw attention to – our desire for pleasure certainly is. This shared striving is what makes us human. My corpus demonstrates that the human at the core of human rights law and discourse is ultimately a pleasure-seeking subject who desires to lead a wholesome and fulfilling life.

Gowhar Fazili, a Kashmiri scholar and prominent human rights activist, explores the intrinsic potential and potency of pleasure in staging resistance and claiming human rights, as highlighted in the quotation below:

Does resistance necessarily have a direct relationship with suffering and inverse relationship with pleasure and happiness? This is a question that is particularly significant for long drawn resistance movements facing a formidable enemy insensitive to and largely unruffled by the exertions of resistance. The engagement with occupation often involves violent and non-violent struggle. Both demand sacrifices that warrant shunning of such mundane pleasures and opportunities taken for granted by the populations reconciled with power. If the struggle extends over multiple decades, it is bound to generate fatigue and disillusionment especially among those who have not voluntarily committed themselves to the life of endless self-abnegation even while they may desire freedom from occupation. While all people want to be free from the indignity of living under occupation and dominance, human nature puts limits on how far individuals and populations may be willing to stretch themselves in their denial of bodily desires and material pleasures that life has to offer.

(Fazili, “Can Happiness”)

In these words, there is a recognition of the validity and effectiveness of suffering, and by that token of narratives of suffering, in exposing human rights violations in Kashmir. But Fazili also skilfully suggests that

the staging and public performance of pleasure as a subversive act might counteract and remedy the lethargy of loss. The removal of pleasure as a locus of resistance results in exhaustion on the part of marginalized people hoping to reclaim their human rights. In this situation, Fazili revalorizes the power of “bodily desires and material pleasures” as elements of resistance, and potential tactics for securing one’s human rights (Fazili). In fact, he argues for a shift towards pleasure as a means of resistance and human rights activism and recognizes the political economy of pleasure as a method of fulfilment and resistance amongst human rights workers, scholars, and cultural practitioners in the region.

I am proposing a radical move to consider pleasure and happiness as an active means of resistance – such pleasurable experiences and happiness around which the subject populations may rally despite the prevalence of occupation, obliterating it through the process of exclusion and omission.

The focus on pleasure and happiness in selected Kashmiri human rights stories seems to be rooted in and routed through narratives of local cosmopolitanism in Kashmir. In other words, the life narratives composed by Kashmiri authors discussed in this book combine the vocabulary of human rights with the language of local Kashmiri cosmopolitanism to create a new language with which to write about the conflict in Kashmir and to articulate their dreams, hopes, and losses.

Cosmopolitanism

The term cosmopolitanism is an amalgam of two ancient Greek words namely *cosmos* meaning ‘world’ and *polis* meaning ‘city’ and is used to denote a “citizen of the world” (Werbner 3). As the word suggests, a *cosmopolite* is usually an individual, as opposed to a community, who has been able to create relationships and establish solidarity with groups outside its own ethnic group, caste, nationality or religious community. In other words, a cosmopolite, although rooted within a particular social milieu, is thought to have grafted identities and created affiliative ties beyond “blindly given ties of kinship and country” (Cheah 21). According to Appiah, cosmopolitanism is the “idea that we have obligations to others, obligations that stretch beyond those to whom we are related by the ties of kith and kind, or even the more formal ties of a shared citizenship” (xv).

The *Stanford Online Encyclopedia of Philosophy* traces the genealogy of cosmopolitanism to the Greek Cynics, particularly Diogenes, who proclaimed that he was a *kosmopolites* (a citizen of the world) (Inglis 13). Along with them, the Stoics believed that human beings were part of a universal brotherhood regardless of differences of race, ethnicity or

religion (Inglis 13). For this reason, Stoic philosophers were of the opinion that political systems should govern the world, instead of only a city-state (Inglis 13). Kant, the German Enlightenment philosopher, is also viewed as an influential figure in developing Western cosmopolitan philosophy (Cheah 2122). In his seminal work *Perpetual Peace*, Kant argued for the formation of a “league of nations” or a “league of peace (*foedus pacificum*)” which would strive to “make an end of all wars forever” (Kant 139–40). In addition, it would be responsible for “the maintenance and security of the freedom of the state itself and of other states in league with it” (Kant 140).

According to Inglis, this genealogy of the development of cosmopolitan philosophy constitutes a “standard narration” and has been perpetuated by contemporary philosophers like Martha Nussbaum who has made Greek classical philosophy relevant to current discussions of political cosmopolitanism (Inglis 13). Inglis argues that this ‘standard narration’ should be contested and its Eurocentrism exposed (12). The need to re-write Eurocentric histories of cosmopolitanism is also emphasized by Walter Dignolo who argues that European cosmopolitanism should be replaced by “de-colonial cosmopolitanism” and “border thinking” (Dignolo 86). According to Dignolo, border thinking involves the invocation of repressed histories that enable us to “confront Kantian cosmopolitanism grounded in territorial and global linear thinking” (86, 94).

In addition to this, cosmopolitanism is no longer viewed as the practice of privileged, intellectual (and usually Western) elites. In light of the theoretical shifts in the discipline of anthropology in the 1990s, “new cosmopolitanisms,” which could be rooted, working class, and non-European as well as community-oriented, were highlighted and brought to the fore (Werbnier 2). Pnina Werbnier’s book, *Anthropology and The New Cosmopolitanism*, articulates these lived cosmopolitanisms with a difference that are formed at the margins. These new cosmopolitanisms include “vernacular cosmopolitanism,” “actually existing cosmopolitanism,” “situated cosmopolitanism,” “discrepant cosmopolitanism,” “rooted cosmopolitanism,” “postcolonial cosmopolitanism” or even “Asian” and “African cosmopolitanism” (Agathocleous 455; Werbnier 14). The term “vernacular cosmopolitanism” was coined by Homi Bhabha in order to contest Martha Nussbaum’s privileging of Stoic humanism and “universal liberal values . . . above family, ethnic group or nation” (Werbnier 17). As a counterpoint to Nussbaum, Bhabha postulated an alternative notion of a “cosmopolitan community” which is “envisaged in marginality (195–96). Werbnier takes “vernacular cosmopolitanism” to refer to situated and actually-existing practices of cosmopolitanism, which are part of the lived experiences of particular communities (14).

The combination of a modifier with the term cosmopolitanism is meant to negotiate its European etymology and history while also acknowledging the existence of ‘other,’ non-European variants. For instance, there appears

to be a productive tension in the term ‘vernacular cosmopolitanism’ because, on the one hand, it implies a problematic European history as well as notions of elitism and privilege, while on the other hand, the modifier ‘vernacular’ is suggestive of something more localized and grounded (Agathocleous 455). However, according to some critics, the combination of the term ‘cosmopolitanism’ with politically appropriate modifiers has less to do with creating a productive tension and more to do with sidestepping the historical baggage associated with the concept (455).

Werbner dismisses the claim that adding a modifier to the word cosmopolitanism is a method of evading its historical origins. Instead she argues that discrepant cosmopolitanisms render the classical and Kantian origins of cosmopolitan discourse relevant again and compel scholars to tease out “what it means to be cosmopolitan at the turn of the twenty-first century.” (15). Furthermore, she argues compellingly that cosmopolitanism is always rooted within a particular socio-cultural milieu (Werbner 13). In other words, she posits that although cosmopolitan discourses need to be decolonized, it is possible, and indeed necessary, to view even the universalist message of Western cosmopolitan discourses as the product of local realities and vocabularies (Werbner 13). The ‘cosmopolitanism in ‘vernacular cosmopolitanism’ should not be viewed as a semantically stable object, evocative of a hegemonic universalism. Instead of viewing ‘cosmopolitanism’ as the hegemonic binary of ‘vernacular,’ Werbner states that it should be seen as yet another form of ‘vernacular cosmopolitanism,’ which is situated in a particular geographical location and conceived of during a specific historical period.

Pollock et. al propose to “provincialize cosmopolitanism” by seeking “cosmopolitan genealogies from the non-Christian Sanskrit world” (6). Gurminder Bhambra summarizes attempts by Pollock et. al to provincialize cosmopolitanism as a way to “decentre Europe in our considerations” (323). Following on from this, we see that cosmopolitanism ‘proper’ has been conceived within local parameters and is rooted within specific geo-political circumstances and should be considered vernacular in some sense. As such all cosmopolitanisms – even the normative Classical Greek or Kantian variants – are ultimately vernacular evocations of a transcendent notion of global community. Nevertheless, I argue that European variants of cosmopolitanism, which are embedded within a ‘standard narration,’ have a currency and a cultural hegemony that is not shared by ‘other,’ non-European articulations of cosmopolitanism and for this reason, it is important to ‘modify’ cosmopolitanism with words such as ‘rooted’ or ‘vernacular’ as a way of engaging with this historical and cultural hegemony. Moreover, I concur with Pollock, who argues that the word cosmopolitanism has decidedly Greek linguistic roots so as long as the term cosmopolitanism is used to describe a kind of transcendent identity, Graeco-European history will always be intertwined with it by way of etymology (Pollock 20).

Pollock also highlights the linguistic dimension of ‘vernacular cosmopolitanism’” by comparing the “Sanskrit cosmopolis,” a spatial as well as cultural ‘world’ engendered by Sanskrit, with *Latinitas*, the intellectual ‘world’ of Latin (Pollock 24). The local cosmopolitanism represented in the life narratives discussed in this book is also rooted in language and linguistic use, as I will go on to explore. In addition to this, Necipoglo argues that cosmopolitanism can also have visual aspects and discusses examples of “visual cosmopolitanism” from the Ottoman period (1). I also propose a new term – textured cosmopolitanism – which is meant to capture the collaborative material aspects of cosmopolitanism and to show that cosmopolitanism can also be touchable and palpable (see Chapter 3).

Cosmopolitanism and *Kashmiriyat*

Kashmiris have a word for a notion of local cosmopolitanism, namely *Kashmiriyat*. For this reason, I will use the terms ‘vernacular cosmopolitanism,’ ‘local cosmopolitanism,’ and ‘*Kashmiriyat*’ synonymously in this book. In addition to this, I will also use the terms ‘visual cosmopolitanism’ and ‘textured cosmopolitanism’ when analyzing the visual and material aspects of *Kashmiriyat*. The term *Kashmiriyat* however has the same problem of theoretical vagueness that accompanies the term cosmopolitanism and is even more of a semantic minefield due to the political implications that ideological deployments of *Kashmiriyat* have in the region (Aggarwal 227). There is a palimpsest of meanings, narratives, and cultural memories that are associated with the term. ‘Local cosmopolitanism’ is the closest English equivalent of the notion of *Kashmiriyat* and adequately captures the ideas of cultural syncretism, itinerancy, mobility, pleasure, and openness, which, I argue, are implied by the term *Kashmiriyat* and are specifically used with reference to Kashmir.

Kashmiriyat is an ‘idea’ that “emphasized the unique history of the Kashmiri people, the syncretism of various religious beliefs in the Vale, and the historical peace between different religions and ethnicities in the Vale” (Arakotaram 34). It has been defined as “a sense of Kashmiriness” (Ellis and Khan), a “Kashmiri consciousness” (Ellis and Khan), “the ethos of being Kashmiri” (Aggarwal), a “cosmopolitan affiliation” (Puri), a hybrid religious identity (Sufi), the cultural “unity of Kashmir” (Ellis and Khan), “a doctrine” with religious origins (Lone), a linguistic identity (Kumar), “Kashmiri culture/identity” (Lone), “a distinct cultural identity” (Shauq qtd. in Hassan) and even a “a cultural space within which Vedic Hinduism and Sufi Islam formed an in-between space” (Khan). A considerable amount of critical scholarship has gone into interrogating and defining the term *Kashmiriyat* in the past and each scholarly engagement with the term generates a unique definition, and in some cases, a distinctive genealogy of *Kashmiriyat*.

Neil Aggarwal, in an insightful article, argues that the term *Kashmiriyat* has “slippery semantics” since it is an “empty signifier” (Aggarwal 227). He defines an empty signifier as “a truth beyond representation and falsification which reflects an imaginary rather than actual phenomenon” (231). Aggarwal is of the view that “frequent usage of the term demonstrates its centrality in conversations about Jammu and Kashmir, but the wielders of the term freely adjust its definition for their own purposes” (Aggarwal 227). He draws upon official statements from the Pakistani and Indian government and the Kashmiri APHC (All Parties Hurriyat Conference), news articles, media reports, critical scholarship as well as laypersons in order to map the way that *Kashmiriyat*, as a term, has been used, contextualized, and disseminated.

Aggarwal also highlights the internal inconsistencies that exist within particular narratives of *Kashmiriyat* as a cultural, religious, and territorial identity. For instance, he states that it is problematic to posit *Kashmiriyat* as a ‘unique’ cultural exchange between Kashmiri Hindus and Muslims because “other regions of South Asia have also witnessed such exchanges” (Aggarwal 228). Similarly, religious evocations of *Kashmiriyat* perpetuated by individuals often privilege the influence of one religion (for instance ‘Sufi Islam’) over another religion (for instance Shaivite Hinduism) depending on their ideological position; consequently “no clear consensus exists on whether *Kashmiriyat* is more deeply rooted in Hinduism or in Islam” (Aggarwal 229). As far as territorial notions of *Kashmiriyat* are concerned, these often do not take contemporary political and cultural affiliations into account and the way that these affiliations have evolved since the time of partition (229). Most significantly though, Aggarwal’s article shows how discussions of *Kashmiriyat* evoke ambiguity and fervour regardless of which side of the argument one chooses to align oneself with. Proponents of *Kashmiriyat* defend its existence using florid language and impassioned rhetoric, whereas detractors of *Kashmiriyat* cast its very existence into doubt with equivalent zeal and conviction.

In addition to this, articulations of *Kashmiriyat* often involve a suppression of difference and a lack of acknowledgement of the multiple, intra-religious identities that exist in the region (233). This is conclusively summarized in the following sentence: “*Kashmiriyat* excludes religious minorities within Jammu and Kashmir and ignores the diversity within Hindus and Muslims, standing in as a poor synecdoche for the aspirations of the state’s entire population” (33). Chitrlekha Zutshi levels more of the same criticisms at evocations of *Kashmiriyat* and contests articulations of the concept, which view it as a fossilized historical formation with roots in the 13th century (55).

Zutshi states that “To suggest that a Kashmiri identity, *Kashmiriyat*, defined as a harmonious blending of religious cultures, has somehow remained unchanged and an integral part of Kashmiri history over

the centuries, is a historical fallacy" (Zutshi 55). For her *Kashmiriyat* or indeed any "concept of syncretism, particularly as applied to India's history, was clearly a product of its time and appears to have outlived its usefulness as an academic construct" (311). In *Kashmir's Contested Pasts*, she maintains that "Kashmiriyat does not define Kashmir's past since it was no different than Punjabi, Bengali, and so on, which were merely sub-identities of Indian national identity" (308). At the same time, she cautions against the erasure of hybrid identity formation and cosmopolitan interactions from the history of Kashmir. "Kashmiriyat," she writes, "is a bankrupt academic concept, but one cannot use its rejection as a means to erase centuries of inter-religious, interregional, and multi-linguistic interactions that have shaped Kashmir in the past and continue to shape it in the present" (*Kashmir's Contested* 313).

I would argue that contrary to Zutshi's claims, *Kashmiriyat* is far from being an outmoded and redundant concept and Zutshi herself acknowledges the existence of a lived *Kashmiriyat* encompassed by the "centuries of multi-linguistic interactions" she mentions in the claim above. In fact, I posit that the term *Kashmiriyat*, both as an academic concept and as lived experience cannot be easily jettisoned, as I will demonstrate with reference to my corpus. Kashmiri writers represent "inter-religious and inter-regional . . . interactions" and as such, attempt to tap into the history of *Kashmiriyat*, which is shown to be bound up with such interactions. They continue to use and explore different, multivalent narratives of *Kashmiriyat* in their life narratives and these in turn participate in re-mapping and refurbishing *Kashmiriyat* as both an analytical concept and a lived practice. Like any other regional or national identity claims, *Kashmiriyat* should not be viewed as an irrefutable historical monolith. As both Zutshi and Aggarwal have shown, *Kashmiriyat* is neither as stable nor as monolithic as its proponents or even its detractors would have us believe. In keeping with this, in the literary works examined here, *Kashmiriyat* is not a given, but its semantics, epistemological parameters and political and literary deployments, continue to change and to shift.

Moreover, the exploration of Kashmiri cosmopolitanism and identity by Kashmiri authors within works of literature is an act of reclaiming power. It is an assertion of Kashmirihood in the face of institutionalized repression, nihilism, and violence. The Kashmiri writings studied here selectively mine transnational discourses of human rights as well as local narratives of cosmopolitan identity in order to construct multivalent languages and narratives of pleasure that testify to the centrality of pleasure to the human condition. The protagonists and narrators have an overwhelming desire to enjoy the pleasures and rhythms of everyday life in Kashmir. Their demands surpass the need for bodily autonomy and protection from physical harm and extend to access to the types of pleasures and enjoyment that are perhaps not always considered important or significant enough in political conversations on Kashmir and the human rights of Kashmiris.

These include the pleasures of local craft, romantic love, Bollywood films, regional cuisine and, papier mache art, to name a few.

The Metropolitan Book Market

The literary network of the international English-speaking book market has become a key space where Kashmiri art and politics are now being discussed and talked about. Stories from Kashmir analyze the allure of radicalization and the beauty of Kashmiri shawls, in the same breath. Kashmiri life narratives are selectively making their way from Kashmir and its diasporas to newer audiences and finding eager allies and sympathetic listeners, as I will go on to explore in the forthcoming chapters. These stories are consequently able to circulate easily in the literary networks of both the national and transnational public sphere and enter into dialogue with a diverse set of English-speaking readers, both at home and abroad.

The explosion of Anglophone Kashmiri and Kashmircentric writing, since 2008, needs to be viewed in relation to the growing visibility of South Asian authors on the global literary scene and the heightened interest in “home-grown” South Asian fiction (Foy). Following the publication of Mohsin Hamid’s *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) to critical acclaim, there has been a “new wave of Pakistani writing” that has captured the imagination of an international readership including novels such as Mohammed Hanif’s *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* (2008) and *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* (2011) and Kamila Shamsie’s *Burnt Shadows* (2009) (Kanwal 200).

There is a parallel turn towards Anglophone writing in Bangladesh, a country where writing in English was considered a form of national disloyalty until recently. Kaiser Haq, who curated *Wasafiri*’s special edition on Bangladeshi writing (2015), claimed that “there is a sudden efflorescence after decades” as far as Bangladeshi literature in English is concerned and that this “efflorescence is conspicuous in the field of fictional and nonfictional prose” (7). In recent times, Anglophone writing from the region is being “received and nurtured,” a fact that is indicative of the country’s “growing cultural confidence” and the cementing of its national identity (Akbar and Ahmed 1). South Asian cultural practitioners are becoming increasingly aware of their own positioning not just as national and/or regional subjects, but as global participants in a transnational conversation on identity and rights.

The recent blossoming of Kashmiri writing in English is not only a reflection of the growth of cultural resistance in Kashmir but also of the broader, structural transformations that are re-shaping the world of South Asian writing and publishing. Life narratives and postcolonial novels published by an emerging generation of Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, and now Kashmiris are beginning to carve out their share of the

metropolitan book market – a market which has thus far been almost exclusively dominated by local and diasporic Indian literary voices – and have become instrumental in the mobilization of regional reading publics as viable consumers of their literary products. While the physical mobility of South Asian citizens is still heavily reliant on the ever-changing strict visa policies in the region, texts in English are able to travel across bitterly contested national borders and mediate political, social, and aesthetic realities for a diverse and politically engaged South Asian reading public.

Chitralkha Zutshi argues that Anglophone Kashmiri texts highlight the persistence of a Kashmiri “narrative public” (*Kashmir’s Contested* 302). She argues that academics working on Kashmir must necessarily engage with these Anglophone literary narratives and the attendant publics they create, if they wish to “remain relevant during, and indeed contribute something beneficial to, this moment of crisis in Kashmir” (*Kashmir’s Contested* 302). She defines a Kashmiri narrative public as a “socio-cultural network” within which “historical memory was created and maintained in Kashmir” (247). Whereas Zutshi is concerned with the circulation of Kashmiri narrative texts within the Kashmiri public sphere, I am interested in their movement within the wider, national and transnational public sphere as well. For Zutshi, Kashmiri life narratives in English are part of an existing trajectory of Kashmiri stories and oral narratives. However, it is my contention that the life narratives considered in this book strategically weave local narratives of citizenship and cosmopolitanism with global discourses of human rights so as to render them mobile in the national and transnational public sphere. The networks that circulate and disseminate English language Kashmiri texts are not the same as those that distribute literary works composed in regional languages and have a much wider reach than traditional oral storytelling arenas. For these reasons, I argue that selected examples of Kashmiri life narrative are addressed and relevant to different publics, a local Kashmiri public, Indian and Pakistani publics as well as transnational publics.

Throughout this work, I will use the term ‘Kashmiri public’ ‘Indian public’ or ‘Pakistani public’ to indicate regional publics instead of Zutshi’s term “Kashmiri narrative public.” According to Michael Warner a public exists by virtue of the fact that “texts can be picked up at different times and different places by otherwise unrelated people” (51). In other words, the movement of narratives is implied within the notion of a public and while Zutshi uses the term ‘narrative public’ to foreground the role played specifically by written and oral narratives, I find the insertion of the word ‘narrative’ redundant as far as the discussion of publics is concerned. Moreover, a public is a “space of discourse” which exists solely by virtue of “being addressed” (50). As Anglophone texts published by international publishing houses, the narratives studied here address readers in South Asia as well as in the wider, English-speaking

world and because of this, they bring a transnational reading public into being.

Nancy Fraser argues that the notion of a Habermasian public sphere assumes a “Westphalian frame” in which the public sphere corresponds with a sovereign nation-state whose chief “interlocutors” are “fellow members of a political community with equal rights to participate in political rights” (Fraser 9, 11). This Westphalian frame cannot be seamlessly “scaled up” when speaking of “discursive arenas that overflow the bounds of both nations and states” because certain important assumptions of public sphere theory do not apply in that case (8). The idea of a public sphere is grounded in the “critical theory of democracy” and thus, such a discursive space is based on the notion that “public opinion” can be mobilized as a “political force” (Fraser 8–9). However public opinion generated by the public of a transnational public sphere may not be legitimate or impactful since members of such a ‘public’ are not necessarily national citizens with equal rights and equal access to civil participation. Since the public sphere does not coincide with a sovereign nation-state, the efficacy of public opinion can also be called into question. Kate Nash argues that Fraser’s main contribution to the theorization of the transnational public sphere is that she compels those who invoke such a sphere to unpack exactly who is included in such a ‘public’ (5).

Instead of jettisoning the term “transnational public sphere,” Fraser tries to re-formulate public sphere theory and proposes the “all-affected principle” according to which, in a post-Westphalian arena, “public opinion is legitimate if . . . it results from a communicative process in which all potentially affected can participate as peers, regardless of political citizenship” (30–31). Rosanne Kennedy analyses this all-affected principle in the context of the Palestinian conflict and the Goldstone Mission. The Goldstone Mission was a “UN fact-finding mission, headed by Judge Richard Goldstone” and was established in April 2009 to investigate human rights violations in Palestine during the Gaza War in January 2009 (Urquhart). The findings of the mission were published in the form of the Goldstone Report in September 2009 (Urquhart). Kennedy is of the opinion that because of the Goldstone Mission, and the subsequent circulation of the Goldstone Report, stateless Palestinians were able to “participate as peers in a communicative process of making claims of abuses and constructing memories that circulate in the transnational public sphere” (R. Kennedy 73). Through this participation, they positioned themselves not as victims but as “political subjects” able to generate and influence “public opinion about the conflict” and demand that “Israel and indeed ‘the world’ be held accountable” (R. Kennedy 73).

In this book, I argue that by successfully circulating their narratives in the national and transnational public sphere, Kashmiri writers and public intellectuals position themselves as political subjects able to articulate and influence public opinion on Kashmir. Kashmiri authors have been

successful in transforming the prolific English-language book market into a type of “transnational advocacy network” and its locally and globally situated metropolitan readership into a “witnessing public” (Keck and Sikkink 190; McLagan 194). The underlying purpose behind crafting and circulating highly aesthetic human rights stories is not only to participate themselves in the process of political opinion and decision-making on and about Kashmir, but also to invite other distantly located actors to do so as well.

Narrative versus Non-Narrative Forms

Certainly, this study is not the only one to analyze Anglophone writing from and about Kashmir and its role in shaping narratives of Kashmiri identity. For instance, Manisha Gangahar’s *Kashmir’s Narratives of Conflict: Identity Lost in Space and Time* (2014) dissects selected Anglophone literary texts and memoirs produced by the post-insurgency generation and the way these works negotiate fraught questions of Kashmiri religious, regional, and national identity and accompanying legacies of *Kashmiriyat*. However, Gangahar, in likeness to Zutshi, sounds the death-knell for *Kashmiriyat*. She argues that the conflict that has unfolded in Kashmir over the past seven decades, has resulted in the loss of “Kashmiriyat . . . in space and in time” and the demise of the syncretic culture that bound ethnically and religiously diverse Kashmiris (Gangahar 1).

On the contrary, in this book, I argue that *Kashmiriyat* has a tremendous relevance in the context of current creative literature from Kashmir. It is my view that narratives of syncretic regional identity in a space of violent contestation are being revised and given new political, social, and aesthetic import in the Kashmiri life narratives discussed in this work. Moreover, Gangahar devotes significant space to evaluating the media coverage of the Kashmir conflict over the past decade and as such, Kashmiri literary narratives are not the only or even the most significant focus of her analysis. In contrast, my book focuses primarily on Kashmiri narratives and attempts to analyze and to develop a theoretical framework for these writings.

This book builds on the insights which inform Ananya Kabir’s seminal work, *Territory of Desire*, in which she explores the discursive means with which the territory of Kashmir came to be so “intensely desired” within the Indo-Pakistani imagination and the way in which Kashmiri cultural producers engage with these historical legacies and discourses of desire (15). Kabir’s monograph is primarily involved in exploring the historical roots and the literary and cultural representation of the “Indian desire for the Valley of Kashmir, and Kashmiri responses to that desire,” whereas in this book, I highlight how Kashmiri cultural practitioners attempt to reach beyond India and to mobilize local Pakistani, Kashmiri, and Indian publics as well as transnational reading publics beyond South Asia (1).

Furthermore, Kabir writes that the “heart of the book’s inquiry” is “collective desire” as expressed and mobilized through Bollywood films, colonial, and postcolonial photography and Kashmiri handicraft and the Kashmiri critique of this desire, whereas in this book, I examine how the cultural capital that Kashmir as a territory has gathered since partition is strategically used to create commercially popular, transnationally mobile, gripping stories about Kashmir (23). The narratives examined in this book, are not only interested in critiquing, but also in capitalizing on the Indian desirability of Kashmir in order to create sympathy for Kashmiri political aspirations and the demand for human rights in India and abroad.

Kabir’s monograph “advocate[s] the reconciliatory power of non-narrative” forms and focuses exclusively on “fragmentary responses to conflict, such as the artwork, the lyric poem, and the poetic documentary,” while this book focuses primarily on narrative responses (22). She consistently aims to valorize “the object over the text, the image over the word, the lyric and the fragment over the linear sequence” (25). Despite her apparent methodological disavowal of narrative forms, she includes close readings of Rushdie’s novels, *Shalimar the Clown* and *Midnight’s Children*, Sudha Koul’s memoir, *The Tiger Ladies* and a translated collection of Kashmiri short stories, *Stranger Beside Me* in her analysis, which highlights the prominence of narrative forms within Kashmiri cultural production.

As mentioned earlier, since the publication of *The Territory of Desire* in 2009, it has primarily been narrative forms – in particular the Bildungsroman but also the memoir, the prison narrative, the newspaper article, the book chapter, the blog post, the human rights report – which have emerged as the chosen medium for an emerging generation of Kashmiri activists and cultural practitioners in the past few years. The texts considered in this book offer prime examples of fictional and non-fictional works that instead of colluding with Indian and Pakistanis state narratives, write back to them. They create space for disruptive, resonant, and powerful Kashmiri voices. The “upsurge in quality Kashmiri writing in English” to which Claire Chambers drew attention in 2011, and which has continued till the present moment, is a development which took place after the publication of Kabir’s work and, as such, this new body of life writing from and about Kashmir is not accounted for in her work (Chambers, “The Last”). The fundamental aim of this book is to map this emergent terrain of Kashmiri writing and to uncover the relationship between selected examples of narrative and human rights advocacy. Human rights vocabulary is consistently used within Kashmiri life narratives and the latter are also marketed as literature in the service of human rights, as I will go on to demonstrate in the ensuing chapters of this book. Prior to this, Kashmiri cultural production has not been analyzed within the framework of human rights before, and it is this gap that I hope to fill with my work.

Kashmiri Life Narratives

There has been a historical interest in Western prose texts in Kashmir, much before the publication of English language texts by Kashmiri and Kashmircentric authors, and this is highlighted by the fact that several canonical Western literary works are widely read in Kashmir and have also been translated into Koshur, the vernacular language of the region, to be made accessible to the local readership. Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*, and Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace* are examples of non-Kashmiri texts that have been translated from their original language and published in the Koshur language (Kachru, *Kashmiri Literature* 96). Kashmiri authors had long been experimenting with the English language and its literary forms. For instance, Kashmiri poet Mahjur employed code-switching between Persian, Kashmiri, and English in his satirical, early 20th century poem, *Aha ha Kalarki*, whereas his contemporary Dina Nath Nadim used the form and stylistic features of Shakespearean and Petrarchan sonnets to compose his own verses in the vernacular (Kachru, *Kashmiri Literature* 50, 70). The existing – albeit limited – historical presence of Anglophone writing and Western literary genres in Kashmir before 2008 does not detract from the fact that the blossoming of new Anglophone writing from Kashmir that we observe around 2008 is important and unprecedented in the field of Kashmiri literature in English.

It is also useful to note that this work does not aspire to be a comprehensive and exhaustive study of *all* Anglophone Kashmiri creative literature published in recent years, since that would lie outside its scope. My survey of the field of Anglophone Kashmiri writing demonstrates that new writing is constantly emerging from Kashmir and its attendant Kashmiri diasporas in the West. This book is primarily centred around Mirza Waheed's novels, *The Collaborator* (2011) and *The Book of Gold Leaves* (2014), Jaspreet Singh's novel, *Chef* (2012), Rahul Pandita's memoir, *Our Moon has Bloodclots* (2013), Basharat Peer's memoir, *Curfewed Night* (2010) and Sudha Koul's memoir, *The Tiger Ladies* (2002). I also examine non-literary forms of storytelling within human rights frameworks including human rights reports and testimonies. The corpus provides a representative selection of texts across genres insofar as both fictional and non-fictional genres are included. Within fictional genre types, the subgenre of the novel, particularly the coming of age novel or Bildungsroman is especially prominent. The Bildungsroman has its roots in an 18th century German literary tradition, and non-German critics refer to it using English equivalents such as the "apprenticeship novel," "novel of education" or "novel of development" (Bolaki 20; Boes 241; Lima 3). Bildung refers to the "humanist concept of formation/education" (Stein 24). As far as non-fictional genre types are concerned, the subgenre of the memoir emerges as one of the most important narrative types.

The memoir is a form of non-fictional narrative in which the focus, unlike autobiography, is less on the “author’s developing self” and more on “the people and events that the author has known or witnessed” (Abrams and Harpham 30). Smith and Watson state that ‘memoir’ is a “malleable” term and is increasingly used by “publishing houses to describe various practices and genres of self life writing” (*Reading* 3).

My corpus reflects the religious and ethnic diversity that characterizes Kashmiri writing in general and reflects the cultural hybridity of Kashmir as a geographical region. For example, I include both Kashmiri Muslim and Kashmiri Pandit writers. Gowhar Fazili argues that due to the pervasive presence of violence in Kashmir, there is a lack of accommodation towards divergent and dissenting voices that fall outside the dominant Kashmiri victim narrative (218). For him, the dominant Kashmiri narrative “has a favourable bias towards the masculine, majoritarian identity” whereas other in-between subjectivities and articulations of anger and fear are intentionally suppressed, glossed over, and/or co-opted (218). Recently, following the rise of the #MeToo movement in India, women took powerful men to task for sexual harassment and a Kashmiri journalist, Fahad Shah, was also accused of sexual misconduct by his former employees and a Delhi-based female journalist, Rama Dwivedi (Chatterjee). In response to this, academics affiliated with the Critical Kashmir Studies Collective (CKSC) released a decolonial feminist statement, urging Kashmiri scholars, writers, and activists to make space for female victim narratives rather than attempting to silence them, or maligning the accusers to ‘preserve’ the integrity and cohesion of the resistance:

Those who support the movement for Azadi must be wary of dismissing women’s complaints and brushing them under the carpet in the name of protecting the resistance. For a due process to take place, it is important that victims be believed, and space is created where women feel that they are able to voice their experiences without censure, stigma, or rebuke.

In lieu of this, instead of only or primarily choosing human rights narratives composed by Kashmiri Muslim male authors, I have chosen a broad sample of authors who speak from their own distinctive subject positions and view the politics of Kashmir through their own lens. The authors of the chosen narratives claim multiple identities, besides ‘Kashmiri.’ Sudha Koul, for example, who is a female Kashmiri Pandit author, can also be studied as an Indian-American or Kashmiri-American writer. Similarly, Jaspreet Singh can be categorized as ‘Kashmircentric’ and ‘Canadian-Indian.’ The selected authors represent a range of regional, national, religious, and ethnic allegiances and identities and, as such, their works can, to a significant extent, be considered representative of

the larger body of Kashmiri writing emerging from the region and its attendant diasporas.

I have, in particular, tried to largely focus on works that have been written by the generation of Kashmiris who came of age during the 1990s, when the violence in Kashmir was at its peak, because it is mostly members of this generation who are attempting to change the way in which ordinary Kashmiris engage with the Indian state and organize and conduct political activity in the national and transnational public sphere.

Most importantly, every text in the corpus is focused on a different facet of pleasure and human rights. Each of the works I treat in depth in this book brings a different aspect of the interaction between human rights advocacy, narration, and the issue of pleasure into play. The selected texts represent disparate forms of pleasure – material, visual, and culinary – and tackle a range of issues related to the politics of representation and of rights. Altogether the selected texts enable us to analyze different elements of the relationship between human rights advocacy and representations of pleasure.

In the first chapter, titled “Mobilizing Pleasure Through Genre: *Curfewed Night* and *Our Moon Has Bloodclots* as Kashmiri Bildungsromane,” I examine Basharat Peer’s *Curfewed Night* and Rahul Pandita’s *Our Moon has Bloodclots* and highlight how these memoirs can both be classified as non-fictional Bildungsromane. In the second chapter, “Literary Fiction as an Alternative to a Human Rights Report: the Case of Mirza Waheed’s *The Collaborator*,” I examine human rights reports published by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch as well as local rights groups. I compare and contrast the mode of storytelling in these reports with the form of narrative-making in Mirza Waheed’s novel, *The Collaborator*. In addition, I look at three South Asian social justice movements, in Kashmir and outside it, to further adumbrate the features of the pleasurecentric mode of doing human rights activism. In Chapter Three, “Imagining Local Cosmopolitanism and Cultural Human Rights in Sudha Koul’s *The Tiger Ladies*,” I argue that Koul’s memoir attempts to imagine the state of having human rights, especially the right to cultural participation and gives keener form to the elusive figure of the rights-bearing human person. Koul’s memoir elucidates what it means to have the human right to culture and cultural participation, both of which have been enshrined in the UDHR, and within other instruments of international human rights legislation. My main contention is that works such as *The Tiger Ladies* can be instrumental in allowing legal practitioners to visualize cultural human rights. In Chapter Four, “Palatable Fictions: Negotiating Narratives of Consumption and Subalternity in Jaspreet Singh’s *Chef*,” I examine Jaspreet Singh’s novel *Chef* and argue that the novel deploys visually striking and exoticized depictions of food as a way of exemplifying the relationship between human rights, consumption, and pleasure. I argue that *Chef* uses regional culinary customs primarily

to highlight the differences between the access to pleasure and enjoyment that is on offer to citizens as opposed to 'subaltern citizens.'

Finally, in the last chapter, "Portable Pleasures and Papier-Mâché: Strategic Exoticism in Mirza Waheed's *The Book of Gold Leaves*," I explore the way in which Kashmiri literary works negotiate their position as commercially viable products, while also attempting to be agents of human rights activism and social justice. Taking Mirza Waheed's novel *The Book of Gold Leaves* as a case study, I uncover the assumed audience of this literary work, the way in which they are subtly catered to and acknowledged within the work, and what role, if any, they are invited to play in the complicated matrix of pleasures and pain that characterizes Waheed's novel and Kashmir as a region. I argue that Waheed's work uses strategic exoticism in a truly novel way; it deploys this particular literary technique as a rhetorical mechanism for conducting human rights advocacy.

Together, these chapters will show the depth of the relationship between human rights and pleasure and demonstrate how narratives of happiness and not just pain can also be effectively used to do the work of advocacy.

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